

Wisconsin Grazing Initiative 2009 Annual Report

A compilation of regional and statewide managed grazing Education, Research, and Technical Assistance projects made possible by the Wisconsin Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI), 2006-2009



The **Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative** is dedicated to the protection and improvement of private grazing lands. The organization was founded to provide high quality technical assistance on privately owned grazing lands on a voluntary basis and to increase the awareness of the importance of grazing land resources.

Wisconsin Grazing Initiative 2009

Published January 2010

Contents highlight completed projects in the year 2009
Includes updates and highlights from all grants in progress
from 2006-2009 funds

Program Goal Statement

Our mission is to expand the use of profitable, grazing-based livestock production systems that foster environmental stewardship. This will be accomplished through high quality technical assistance to owners and operators of private land, university and producer coordinated research and educational programs.

Supporting Organizations

Project

Wisconsin Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, Contact: Chairman Paul Onan, 9659 Grayson Road, Amherst Junction, WI 54407, (715) 824-2527, ponan@wi-net.com

Budget and Fiscal Manager



United States Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Wisconsin Natural Resource Conservation Service, www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov, Contact: Brian Pillsbury, State Grazing Specialist, 505 Broadway Room 232, Baraboo, WI 53913, (608) 355-4470, brian.pillsbury@wi.usda.gov

Grant Program Administrator



Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, www.datcp.state.wi.us, Contact: Laura Paine, Grazing and Organic Agriculture Specialist, 2811 Agriculture Drive, PO Box 8911, Madison, WI 53708-8911, (608) 224-5120, laura.paine@wi.gov

Report Author and Editor



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GLCI Grant Highlights 2006-2009

Total Projects Funded = **77**

18 Research Projects

33 Educational Projects

26 Technical Assistance Projects

Total Funding Spent = \$572,533

Completed Activities in 2009

Pasture Walks, Farm Tours and Demos

141 throughout Wisconsin

Educational Workshops, Conferences and Meetings

41 throughout Wisconsin

Grazing Plans Written

320 plans (new and revised) with over **21,457** acres planned and managed

College Partners

University of Wisconsin-River Falls

University of Wisconsin-Madison

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

WI Technical Colleges

Publications Created

The Grazing Planner

Grassworks Quarterly Newsletter

Media Connections

Television, Radio, Newspapers, World Wide Web

Non-Traditional Audiences

Amish, Mennonites, New Graziers, Women, Asian, Native American, African American, Disabled Farmers

Introduction from GLCI President Paul Onan

Another wonderful year has gone by and we are celebrating the accomplishments of many grazing projects funded by the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative. It is with this 4th edition of the Wisconsin Grazing Initiative Annual Report that we highlight the accomplishments as well as summarize what is going on around the state with regard to grazing education, research, and technical assistance.

We hope you find this book as exciting and interesting as we did putting it together. These projects are the result of a great deal of creativity and drive. We have designed the program to provide flexibility, allowing each project address the unique issues and goals of farmers in the local community. Grantees and their farmer partners are dedicated to doing their part to ensure that Wisconsin agriculture is profitable and environmentally friendly.

Funding is provided annually and each project can last up to three years. In the first section of the book, we are proud to present final reports of projects that were completed in 2009. There are also summaries of each of the projects that were funded in 2008 and 2009 and are on-going.

We applaud the farmers, agencies, and organizations whose projects are summarized in this report. We are proud of their accomplishments!

Happy grazing,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul R. Onan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paul Onan
Dairy farmer from Amhearst Junction and GLCI President

Accomplishments

While each of the GLCI-funded education, technical assistance and research projects has taken its own approach to improving managed grazing in Wisconsin, there are enough similarities between many of them to consider their accomplishments and discoveries together. The education projects were completed between 2006-2009 and reported their activities in varying levels of detail. Some carried out specific efforts to educate a specific group, others considered the overall community they were trying to reach, and yet others aimed to educate the whole state. All-in-all their one common goal was educate the farming community as well as the general public about managed grazing and its economic, environmental and social benefits.

Education: Completed project accomplishments totaled more than:

- An estimated **16,131** farmers were served directly through pasture walks, meetings, classes, workshops, one-on-one consultations, farm visits, etc., based on reported attendance at each event (some farmers may have attended more than one event).
- **141** pasture walks, farm tours and demos occurred during the grazing season.
- **41** winter meetings, conferences or workshops were held.
- Tens of thousands of people were introduced to managed grazing through targeted print, television, radio, and internet publicity.

Technical Assistance: Each of the GLCI funded technical assistance projects were designed to develop, deliver and assist farmers with new and existing grazing plans. The completed projects were able to reach over **222** new graziers and created plans for those farmers totaling over **14,484** acres of grass-dominated pasture. In addition, over **98** farmers received continued plan assistance with another **6,971** acres of grass-dominated pasture. This creates a positive, long-lasting impact on our economy, our environment and our communities.

Research: GLCI funded research projects described here generally took place between 2006-2009. The research projects:

- Involved farms using managed grazing, research stations and university farms for the experiments.
- Were completed by both farmers and researchers.
- Achieved the best results in unified communities.
- Contained educational components that provided distribution and education to graziers across the state.

The success of these projects can be measured qualitatively, as well as quantitatively. The following themes expressed by the project leaders and participants are key to the future success of programs and activities that support managed grazing:

- Projects are very successful when farmers teach farmers by sharing information and knowledge and skills.
- Public events and media coverage of these projects increased general awareness of managed grazing and their many benefits to Wisconsin's rural landscape, communities and economy.
- More work is still needed.

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Completed Projects

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Implementation of Silvopasture Demonstrations (617-2)

During this final reporting period the Southwest Bader RC&D implemented two silvopasture demonstrations, held one tour and organized one pasture walk. One of the demonstrations was completed at the Ann Conley farm near Potosi. Ann worked with SW Badger staff to install a silvopasture system where sheep and goats are being used to reclaim an abandoned wooded pasture. This five acre demonstration will be a showcase for landowners interested in implementing this type of silvopasture practice.

A second silvopasture demonstration was completed this summer/fall on a farm near Lancaster. This site was an existing grazed pasture where timber stand improvement practices (TSI) were implemented to increase light penetration in order to improve forage production and improve the health and vigor of the hardwood trees. The timber sale associated with this project should generate enough income to offset the landowners costs associated with removal of tree limbs, seeding and fencing. The fact that income generation can be an up-front benefit of silvopasture should make it very appealing to landowners.

A tour was held at the Lancaster demonstration on August 27 with 25 people in attendance. A pasture walk was held at the Potosi demonstration on October 03 with 15 people in attendance.

The goal of this project was to establish three silvopasture demonstrations in Southwest Wisconsin. The Southwest Badger RC&D Council accomplished this goal and only utilized 20% of the total project funds awarded.

Grant Project Objectives:

- 1) Develop a minimum of three demonstrations on "Crop Tree Management & Managed Intensive Grazing in Pastured Woodlots"
- 2) Form "Silvopasture Technical Work-Group" to evaluate project success
- 3) Hold demonstrations that focus on how MIG combined with crop tree management in pastured woodlots can improve forage production and forest health

Accomplishments

- 1 pasture walk (15 attendees)
- 1 farm tour (25 attendees)
- 3 silvopasture demonstrations
- 10+ one-on-one contacts
- Served Women farmers

Partners

NRCS

Project Location

Southwest WI

Contact Info:

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Northwest Wisconsin Graziers Network Education and Demonstration Project (621-2)

This project held 8 pasture walks with an average attendance of 40+ people. Half of the walks were co-hosted with other networks and one with the LCO tribe, showing continued good collaboration with other networks and organizations. Subjects covered at the walks included leader-follower rotational grazing with sheep, pigs and poultry, rotation of beef more than once per day, local marketing of beef, solar watering systems, organic dairy, drought mitigation, fencing, step-up milking parlors, and other topics.

A wealth of information at three walks was provided by two of the most famous grazing experts in the US – Jim Gerrish and Joel Salatin. Pasture walks have been one of the most effective teaching tools that NW Graziers employs. Since mid-2004, there have been at least 1030 attendees at pasture walks held or co-sponsored by NW Graziers.

NW Graziers and ABDI Graziers co-hosted a UW-River Falls Grazing School in July. There were 18 paid attendees for the two-day course that included 2 farm tours and speakers Brian Pillsbury, Rhonda Gildersleeve, organizers Dennis Cosgrove, Bob Mika and Otto Wiegand, and others.

Lynn Johnson, the NW Graziers intern, steering committee member and now a certified grazing planner, wrote a second NW Graziers newsletter that was sent out in July. He has taken an increasing leadership roll in the network. Johnson attended 13 pasture walks in 2009, seven of them outside of the network area. He wrote two press releases, recruited all exhibitors for the annual conference in March, participated in a dozen meetings including steering committee, NRCS, and St. Croix Watershed events, and made a dozen farm calls to provide technical assistance.

Otto Wiegand, UW Ag Agent for Burnett, Washburn and Sawyer Counties, is hosting the UW-Short Course Beginning Farmer Course this fall and winter in Hayward. NW Graziers is planning to hold its next annual winter conference in mid-March, 2010.

Grant Project Objectives:

- 1) 30 livestock producers will receive the educational support needed to begin implementing prescribed/managed grazing plans
- 2) 150 farmers currently practicing prescribed/managed grazing will participate in the educational and demonstration events conducted by the graziers network

Accomplishments

- 8 pasture walks
- Winter Grazing Conference
- 500 one-on-one contacts
- Served Amish, Mennonite, Women, and Hispanic farmers

Partners

NRCS, UWEX, County LWCD's, Grassworks, NorthCentral Graziers, Lake Superior Grazing Initiative, River Country RC&D, Golden Sands RC&D, UW River Falls, UW Madison, WITC, WI DATCP, NW WI Regional Food Network

Project Location

Northwest WI

Contact Info:

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M.I.G. Establishment in Nine Central Wisconsin Counties (808-2)

Educational events held in 2008-March 2009 included 5 pasture walks and 2 regional conferences with a combined attendance of over 450 farmers and others interested in managed grazing, including one pasture walk attended by Governor Doyle. In addition, no-till drill rentals were made available to landowners via a partnership with the DNR office in Wisconsin Rapids.

Two drills were available and were used on 13 farms and over 300 acres. The dairy profitability discussion group, started in 2006, continued and met a total of 11 times last year. One visit included a trip to the Vosberg farm. The Vosbergs invited the group down to see how the group functioned, in hopes that such a group could form in their area.

Educational events were promoted with a direct mailing to all FSA landowners within Wood, Portage and Waupaca counties and all agency personnel within Golden Sands RC&D's nine county area. This mailing list consists of over 1500 addresses. In addition, press releases were sent to local newspapers and weekly Ag newspapers.

This project also published a quarterly newsletter, "The Grazing Planner" with Marathon County LCD and Pri-Ru-Ta RC&D which was circulated to 1,500 farmers in Wood, Portage and Waupaca Counties. Golden Sands RC&D participated in 2 editions due to a tight budget. The project also developed and aired a grazing public service announcement on WSAW Channel 7 during earth week. A total of thirty-five 2-minute spots aired through out the week. This was done in cooperation with Marathon County LCD.

Grant Project Objectives:

- 1) To promote and successfully implement managed grazing throughout the Golden Sands RC&D region
- 2) Provide individual farm planning, management and technical assistance to existing grazing farms and farms that desire to implement a managed grazing system
- 3) Educate farmers, agribusiness professionals, lenders, policy makers, educators and the general public on the environmental, economic and lifestyle benefits that MIG affords

Accomplishments

- 5 pasture walks
- 2 regional conferences
- 2 no-till drills on 13 farms with 300+ acres
- Quarterly newsletter to over 1,500 farmers
- 300 one-on-one contacts
- Served Amish, Mennonite, and Women farmers

Partners

NRCS, Marathon Co. LCD, Pri-Ru-Ta RC&D, WI DNR, CWGCA

Project Location

Central WI

Contact Info:

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Lake Superior Grazing Initiative - Education & Demonstration (812-2)

This project has had many accomplishments over the past year. It was responsible for pre-event planning and network-wide advertising of Conservation Observance Day in Douglas County and helped with the "Conservation Farmer of the Year" event. It awarded Mark & Cora Liebaert the "2008 Conservation Farmer of the Year" award. They are long-time graziers in Douglas County. Tours of their farm were conducted to show grazing and woodland & streambank conservation/restoration efforts.

The Ashland LCD was able to obtain a no-till drill available for rental by producers in Ashland, Bayfield & Iron counties. This project was responsible for 3 no-till drill demos with over 30 attendees. At each demo, an on-site demonstration of drill operation was performed. Attendees of the demos included local farmers/producers as well as local Ag agents and members of the AERC (Agriculture Energy Research Council).

The project also co-hosted the Marengo Valley Beef Tour in Ashland County. Jim Gerrish spoke on pasture management in drought conditions and grass finishing steers. A very nice article was done by Heidi Clausen in The Country Today. This event was attended by 80 people, mostly farmers and producers.

The project manager also worked with Jason Fischbach, UW Ag Agent for Ashland & Bayfield counties, to gather data on the rye demonstration plots. This information included yield differences on the no-till vs. broadcast fields, planting new seed and comparing the results on the two different farms in the experiment.

Finally, this project was responsible for promotion of several grazing related events in WI. These events included a sustainable farming conference in Hayward and the Beginning Grazer School sponsored by the NorthWest Graziers Network.

Grant Project Objectives:

- 1) Continue to maintain and expand the network of graziers. Graziers work to identify needs, develop goals, cooperate with ABDI-LCD to sponsor continued technical assistance for grazing in the Lake Superior basin
- 2) Expose local producers to managed intensive grazing methods, economics, and ecological sustainability concepts
- 3) Informational newsletter and pasture walk mailings to local producers

Accomplishments

- 3 no-till drill demos (33 attendees)
- 1 farm tour (80 attendees)
- 75 one-on-one contacts

Partners

Pri-Ru-Ta RC&D, NW Grazing Network, UWEX, North Central Graziers Network, Ashland LCD, Black River Industries, UW-River Falls, Bayfield LCD, AERC, LCO

Project Location

Lake Superior Counties/Northern WI

Contact Info:

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North Central Graziers MIG Education & Demonstration Project (814-2)

The 2009 summer of pasture walks was well-attended and informative, thanks to the collaboration between grazing networks and Grazing Specialists in Central and Northern WI. Pasture walks were co-hosted with Marathon Co. LCD, Central WI River Graziers), River Country RC&D, Chippewa Valley & St. Croix Graziers, Lake Superior Grazing Initiative and the NW Graziers Network.

Speakers such as Rhonda Gildersleeve, Jim Gerrish, Tom Weaver, Andy Hager and Darryl Emmick were brought in to spur conversation and offer expertise. The 16 walks associated with this project averaged 41 people in attendance at each outing. A grand total of 743 farmers and others interested in managed grazing attended all of the events.

Attendance at pasture walks for the past 2 years of this project has been closely monitored, resulting in more names/addresses being added to mailing lists. It also has shown what topics seem to draw more of a crowd. By working with the other specialists, more informative walks are offered to clients of this project.

This program also offered several demonstrations including a high-tensile fence and above ground waterline installation demo. It was also responsible for promoting statewide grazing events such as the Beginning Grazier School and Conservation Observance Day in Douglas county. These promotional efforts, along with a June issue of "The Grazing Planner," were mailed out to over 3,000 producers, Land Conservation departments, and NRCS/UWEX/FSA offices in a 7 county area. One pasture walk was also featured in an article of The Country Today.

Grant Project Objectives:

- 1) Add 70 active graziers to the Northcentral Graziers Network
- 2) Provide assistance to underserved and new farmers
- 3) Continue publication of the quarterly newsletter "The Grazing Planner" through April 2010
- 4) Outreach to groups other than livestock producers such as agriculture related businesses and institutions, media outlets, local educators, and local officials

Accomplishments

- 16 pasture walks
- 375 one-on-one contacts
- Served Amish, Mennonite, and Women farmers

Partners

NRCS, Marathon Co. LCD, Central WI River Graziers, River Country RC&D, Chippewa Valley Grazing Network, St. Croix Graziers, Lake Superior Grazing Initiative, NW Graziers Network, Mahner's Welding and Repair, Kemp's Organic, Cutler Fence, Golden Sands RC&D, UWEX, Organic Valley, KOW Consulting Assoc., Organic Choice, WLWCA

Project Location

North Central WI

Contact Info:

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Room 102 Medford, WI 54451
(715) 748-2008
lanice.szomi@rcdnet.net

Managed Grazing Education in the Chippewa Valley (816-2)

Since the beginning of this grant, the Chippewa Valley Grazing Network has been very active. Grant objectives have been exceeded in most areas. The main goal of grazing specialist Kevin Mahalko since coming to River Country RC&D has been to reach as many contacts as possible in his first year, and he is looking forward to more time spent with individual graziers in the future.

The main events of this project included 2 Winter Pasture Walks (one more than planned) that focused primarily on overwintering topics and had a total attendance of 42 people; 3 Discussion Group meetings attended by network members for a total of 58 people; and 1 West Central Wisconsin Winter Grazing Conference.

The grazing conference was held in partnership with the St. Croix Valley Grazing Network, Coulee Grazing Network and Dunn County LCD and reported over 100 in attendance. It was advertised through several media outlets including articles in Graze Magazine and The Country Today as well as radio coverage on WAXX radio. The conference was a great success with a lot of positive feedback provided. The main focus was on grass and the best ways to utilize the power of grass pasture for successful grazing. The evaluations were overwhelmingly positive, with many suggestions for future conferences and what issues the network should focus on.

This project also had several presentations throughout the last year, including stops at the WI State Grazing Conference, a booth presentation at the UW-Eau Claire Aldo Leopold Banquet and 2 classroom Presentations to The Menomonie High school Agriculture and FFA students. In addition, the project manager attended and helped promote MIG at the WI School for Beginning Dairy Farmers distance site in Thorp.

Grant Project Objectives:

- 1) Provide MIG educational assistance to new graziers, interested producers, and interested agency personnel/general public
- 2) Provide opportunities for the managed grazing community to connect with local high school and college classes that have ag or natural resource objectives
- 3) Create and enhance communication between network members, interested individuals, the general public, local ag instructors, and local agency staff

Accomplishments

- 2 pasture walks (42 attendees)
- 3 discussion group meetings
- 1 winter grazing conference
- 40+ one-on-one contacts
- Served Women, Amish, Mennonite, Hispanic, African-American and Asian farmers

Partners

NRCS, UW-Eau Claire, Menomonie HS, UWEX, Carl Werner, Pri-Ru-Ta RC&D, CVTC, NorthCentral/ Chippewa/St. Croix/Coulee Graziers, Dunn Co. LCD, Lance Klessig, AGLS, Joe Tomandl, Out to Pasture Beef, Thousand Hills Cattle Company, GrassWorks, River Country RC&D, Holistic Resource Management, Organic Valley

Project Location

Chippewa Valley/West Central WI

Contact Info:

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River Country RC&D
34717 State Hwy 64
Gilman, WI 54433 (715) 447-5438

Coulee Grazier MIG Education Program (818-2)

In late 2008, the group met and planned their winter discussion group sessions. Sessions began in January 2009 and featured speakers such as Joe Schultz (Focus on Energy) and Doug Gunnick discussing soil fertility and nutrition. In total, there were 4 winter discussion group sessions attended by a total of 92 people.

The group held 2 pasture walks, and one included a Dung Beetle workshop. Farmers learned how to provide a better environment for decomposing insects who provide natural fertilizer for the soil.

The network also sponsored a network member and beginning farmer to attend the Wisconsin School for Beginning Dairy and Livestock Farmers seminar course via distance education. The site was provided by partnering with Western Technical College.

This year was characterized by an increase in one-on-one phone calls, office walk-ins, and requests for farm visits. This was thought to be in part due to the decline in milk prices but also due to the tighter enforcement of grazing rules for organic milk production.

The project also conducted a survey of members of the grazer network. Overall the results were positive, with many members indicating that the one-on-one consultations were very helpful and the discussion meetings and pasture walks were very informative. Many people report that they have since improved the management of their farms and are now more open to new ways of running their farming operations.

This project received funding to continue its work through 2010.

Grant Project Objectives:

- 1) Provide on-farm educational events for farmers and Ag professionals about the benefits of MIG and how a grazing operation handles managing the various stages of grass throughout the entire growing season
- 2) Provide educational opportunities on beginning and advanced grazing management topics
- 3) Provide direct, on-farm, one-on-one educational sessions for beginning and advanced graziers in addition to FFA and 4-H students and landowners who are interested in implementing MIG systems on their farms

Accomplishments

- 4 winter discussions (92 attendees)
- 2 pasture walks (42 attendees)
- 400 one-on-one contacts
- Served Hispanic, Amish, Menonite, Women, and Disabled farmers

Partners

Trempealeau Co. Community TV, Jackson City NRCS, Gilmanton American Legion Post, City of Blair

Project Location

Driftless Area

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Taylor, WI 54659 (715) 662-5053
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Sustaining Farm Profitability for Experienced and Beginning Graziers (824-2)

The last couple years have been very busy for this project. It has been a partner to several activities taking place at the Fox Valley Technical College, including promotion of the Wisconsin School for Beginning Dairy and Livestock Farmers distance education classroom there. In addition, this project was responsible for the organization and promotion of a carbon credit workshop at FVTC in conjunction with the WI Farmers Union.

This project has been involved in the planning and organization of a number of statewide events, including a USDA grant workshop, a Jim Gerrish grazing workshop, 3 Will Winter grazing workshops, and the National Bison Conference. In addition, this project held and/or promoted 16 pasture walks and farm tours that were attended by over 100 farmers and people interested in grazing.

This project has also provided speakers for a number of conferences and events, such as: the "Sustaining Our Living" Lakeshore Natural Resource Partnership workshop, the WI Stop Hunger conference, and a Sustainable Ag Speaker at United Methodist Church in Menasha.

Finally, members of this project have been involved with or served on the board of the following entities: Organic curriculum advisory committee at NE WI Tech College, WI SARE Task Force, Fox River Grazier Network, NEW Foodshed, and the WI Beef Cooperative.

This project received funding to continue its work through 2010.

Grant Project Objectives:

- 1) Provide an educational experience for individuals or farmers new to grazing, including farmers transitioning to grazing. These new graziers will be supplied grazing plans with assistance from the NRCS
- 2) Provide an educational experience to seasoned or veteran graziers. These farmers will have their grazing plans reviewed or updated
- 3) Provide an educational experience interconnecting various organizations, institutions, government agencies and those farmers practicing sustainability and renewable energy

Accomplishments

- 16 pasture walks
- 250 one-on-one contacts
- Served Native American and Women farmers

Partners

FVTC, NRCS, Fox River Graziers, Fond du Lac Grass Graziers, UWEX, NE WI Tech College, WI Farmers Union

Project Location

Northeast WI

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GrassWorks Education Project

This 2006 grant was received as an addition to funds previously received from GLCI to cover educational expenses related primarily to the statewide grazing conference. The 2006 funds helped to execute 2 statewide grazing conferences, each with about 300 attendees. The funds were also used to hire a new executive director for GrassWorks.

This project was also helpful in supporting grazing speakers at the local level that perhaps could not have been brought in otherwise. The project helped acquire speakers such as Larry Tranel (ISU), Jim Gerrish (Missouri), Fred Provenza (Utah), Darrell Emmick (N.Y.) and Jerry Brunetti. The speakers worked across networks and regions and GrassWorks' role was to make their presentations as cost effective as possible.

The grant also supported printing and distribution of several different communication pieces for grazing education, including a quarterly newsletter that was distributed to over 20,000 individuals. The newsletter informed about new grazing practices and often featured farmers who had solutions to grazing problems. It also communicated awareness of grazing and farming events around the state.

The project had a booth or table at many of the previously mentioned events, such as the Grazing Conference, World Dairy Expo, PDPW Conference, Organic Farming Conference, and Farm Technology Days. Tabling at these tradeshow brought the GrassWorks grazing information and resources to more diverse audiences that may not have had exposure to grazing previously.

Another aspect of the project included a continuation of its base website and added two more specialty websites. It was also responsible for the creation of a "you can grazing" video project, which is a helpful tool for those interested in grazing.

Grant Project Objectives:

- 1) Provide high quality grazing education through the Wisconsin Grazing Conference and through workshops
- 2) Use web-based tools to provide information to farmers interested in managed grazing
- 3) GrassWorks will improve methods and means of communicating with producers about managed grazing

Accomplishments

- Facilitated 2 annual statewide grazing conferences
- Distributed 10 quarterly newsletters
- 5000+ one-on-one contacts

Partners

NRCS, UWEX, DATCP, Marathon Co. LCD, UW-Madison CALS, UW Research Stations

Project Location

Statewide

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Legume and Grass Selection & Management for Rotational Grazing (645-3)

The concept of combining grasses and legumes in a pasture has been an important feature of agriculture from the early days of historical records. A grass-legume mix has been used in many countries of the world due to its ability to increase the forage yield in a pasture compared to individual stands of grasses or legumes when no fertilizer is applied. The use of legumes in pastures results in increased N content and higher digestibility along with a high well-balanced mineral content of the grass-legume forage.

The rising costs of N based fertilizer and the need to increase forage yields in pastures has many producers wanting to know the proper seeding rates of grass to legumes in a pasture mix. There is a very evident competition between legumes and grasses. Some of this competition can be influenced by soil type, pH, grazing height and frequency of grazing. It is generally accepted that grasses have a competitive advantage over legumes and therefore tend to dominate pastures, however in order to maintain high pasture productivity a balance between grasses and legumes is desirable.

Often the question asked is "What is the proper seeding ratio of grass to legumes when seeding?" This on-farm trial was designed to help answer this question and involved 5 farms with fields ranging from 10-25 acres.

It has been determined that weather plays a critical role in stand establishment. Fall seeding has been more successful than spring seeding due to the dry spring in 2007. Legume seed emerge quickly and can suppress grass growth and establishment. However, the seeding in 2009 had more typical weather and the legumes and grasses both emerged within a two week interval. In fields that were managed correctly without overgrazing the difference in seeding rates was still apparent in the forage growth. In overgrazed paddocks the grasses and alfalfa are the most prevalent with the clovers most affected by overgrazing, especially red clover. Forage yields were very similar with a slight advantage to high grass mixes in 2009 due to the wet cool late spring and early summer conditions. Yields of 3.8-5.1 tons per acre were achieved in 2009.

Results from Year One: Seedling survival from the fall seeding was measured in the spring of 2008. In all the stands the legumes had a higher stand rate than the grass. The stand counts were taken in random areas of each field in one square foot areas in 5 locations per plot. Stand counts are found in Table 1.

Contact Info:

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Project Location:

Central WI

Primary audience and participants:

Graziers statewide

Table 1

Field 1	Control	High Grass	High Legume
Grasses/sq ft	21	34	20
Legumes/sq ft	33	32	48
Field 2			
Grasses/sq ft	18	28	17
Legumes/sq ft	25	27	39

Increase Success of Managed Intensive Grazing With Forage Suitability Database (640-3)

Between April 15 and June 30 of 2009, Town and Country RC&D (TCRCD) committed Forage Suitability Group (FSG) data to the NRCS Soil Data Warehouse for 57 Wisconsin soil survey areas. Combined with the 12 areas previously committed, this now completes FSG data for all 69 areas in the state. TCRCD hired Tim Meyer as a contractor to execute this work, including the following tasks:

- Review the FSG number assigned to each soil map unit.
- Proof the FSG assigned per each soil map unit.
- Insure that each FSG is within the correct Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) based upon the interpretation criteria created for assigning the FSG and spatial review.

Contact Info:

Haly Schultz
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Project Location:

Statewide

Primary audience and participants:

Graziers statewide

The final FSG product is based upon the following work done prior to the April 15 interim report: Jesse Turk, the State Coordinator for NASIS (the national soil database), created a query to correlate NASIS soil data and FSGs based on the agreed upon soil criteria (available water holding capacity, depth to water table, drainage, slope and flooding frequency).

We validated each FSG for plant species, edited the management narratives to better reflect unique concerns, and reviewed production consistency and overall report layout. We have incorporated recommendations of a six member professional advisory panel for changing the layout of FSG Forage Suitability reports to reference the following principal data: adapted species, production estimates, management interpretations, management dynamics, growth curves, physiographic data, climate data, and soil limitations. Because of possible conflict between some recommended forage species identified as possible invasive species, we have addressed management concerns in the Management Dynamics narrative for each FSG.

FSG Forage Suitability reports and associated Management Dynamics narratives specific to each Wisconsin county are now available as .pdf or Word documents via the NRCS electronic Field Office Technical Guide website.

NRCS has made spatial FSG data available to the general public via Web Soil Survey. Using this tool, land managers can create a map of FSG's on their property. In the future, NRCS will link the before mentioned FSG Forage Suitability reports and associated Management Dynamics narratives with the maps produced via the survey.

NRCS will make complete FSG data available to NRCS staff and partners via the Soil Data Viewer before Oct 1 of this year. Soil Data Viewer is a GIS mapping tool used in creating conservation plans for land operators. NRCS staff and grazing specialists statewide will use this tool to efficiently create FSG maps with narratives for clients, making FSG information a standard product of managed grazing plans.

Evaluation of Legume-Fescue Mixtures for Organic Grazing (836-3)

Paddocks were seeded in two ways to Kura Clover and Kopu II white clover in an evaluation of ease of establishment, yield, quality and longevity in existing pasture. One method was frost seeding and one was renovation by minimal tillage, non-herbicide methods with smooth leaf fescue as a companion. Establishment costs (seed, equipment & labor) ranged from \$25/a for frost seeding Kopu II to \$90/a for renovation with Kura.

Frost seeding was effective for white clover but not for Kura. Over time, it appears the frost seeded white clover treatment equals the renovation method in yield and persistence of the clover stand. See yield summary data attached.

On the renovated fields Kopu II established much better than Kura. Kopu II was far ahead of Kura for three years.

However, there is now (4 years in) visual indication that Kura is becoming established but even now not as well as Kopu II. Data suggest that in the first year after establishment Kopu II could give something on the order of a 30% improvement in dm yield with frost seeding to 50% for the renovated treatment. Through three years Kopu II consistently outperformed Kura with these establishment methods.

Rainfall amount and timing had dramatic effect on the legume component. Both clovers were set back significantly by near-drought conditions in the last months of 2008; Kura worse than Kopu II. Rhonda Gildersleeve points out this is due to Kura being a rhizome-bearing clover that protects itself in drought by transferring energy to the rhizomes at the expense of the above-ground portions of the plant.

On a macro basis applying the Kopu II treatments increased annual Crude Protein yields anywhere from a few pounds more to nearly twice as much as the non-treated paddocks. An approximation of CP production was made by making an annual summation of the product of CP% of samples used to measure yield. For the three years for which we have data (cost, yield and nutritional) that the return on investment in establishing Kopu II ranges up to 150% versus non-treated.

Contact Info:

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Project Location:

Statewide

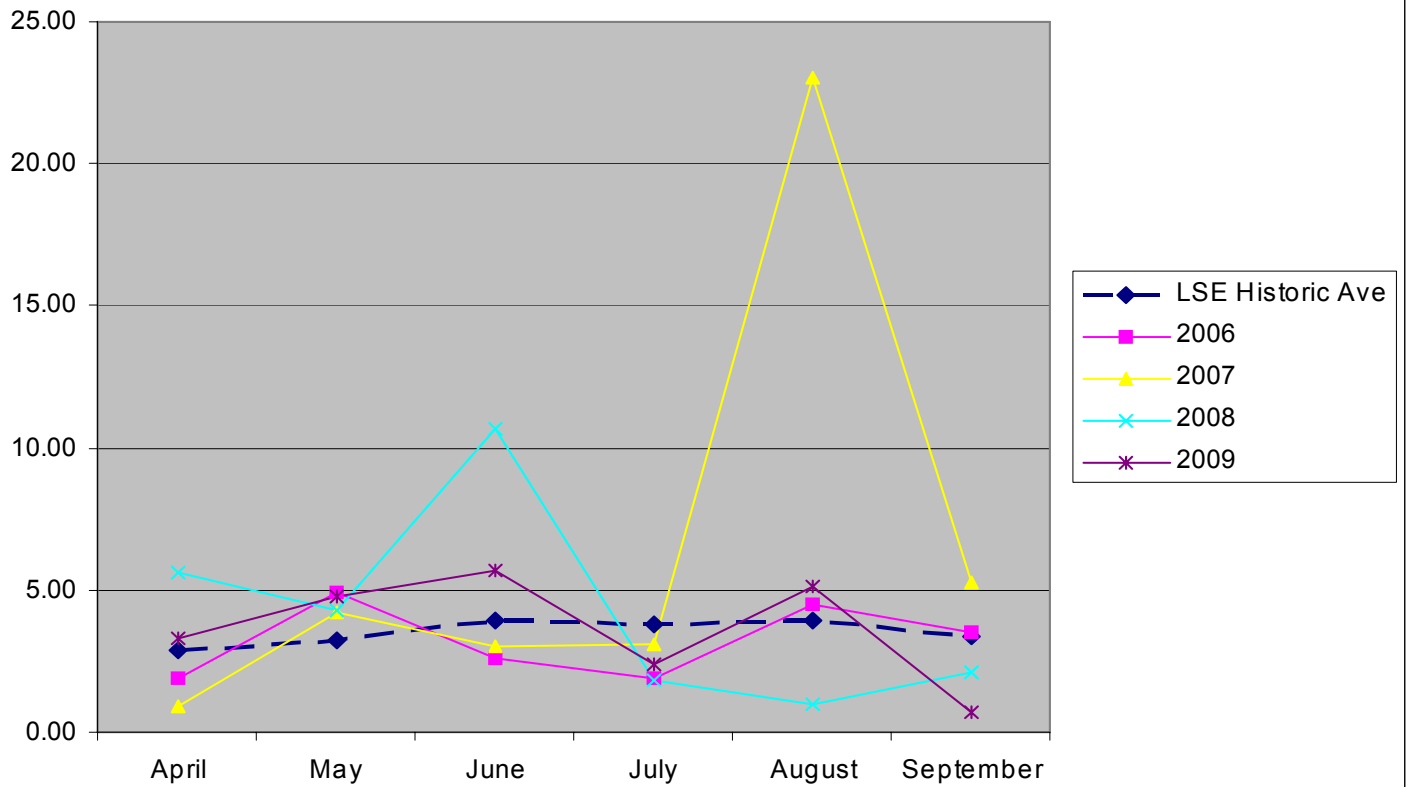
Primary audience and participants:

Organic Graziers

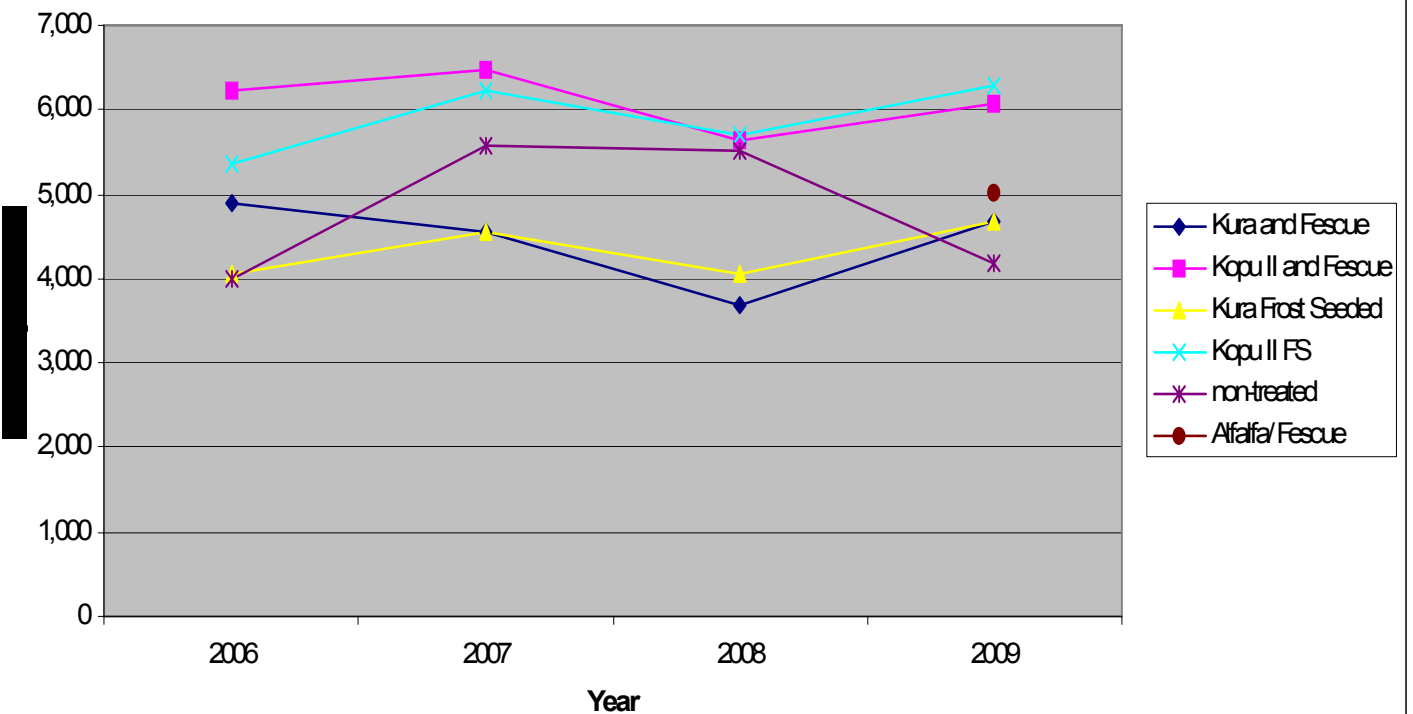
Crude Protein Theoretically Available (Sum of DM Yields times CP% of Yield Sample)

Paddock	Treatment	2006		2007		2008	
		CP (Lb/a)	Vs Control	CP (Lb/a)	Vs Control	CP (Lb/a)	Vs Control
21	Kura and Fescue	1009	1.34	841	0.69	546	0.62
22	Kopu II & Fescue	1525	2.03	1340	1.10	901	1.02
23	Kura FS	1036	1.38	887	0.73	506	0.57
24	Kopu II FS	1281	1.70	1286	1.05	888	1.01
25	Non-treated	753	1.00	1219	1.00	882	1.00
29	Alfalfa & fescue					164	
H1	Alfalfa & fescue					143	

Monthly Rainfall



Dry Matter Yield - Four Year Summary



Genetics, History and Origins of the Wisconsin Meadow Fescue (844-3)

We found meadow fescue populations on over 200 farms in the Driftless Regions of WI, MN, and IA. We found meadow fescue in a wide range of habitats, including uplands, bottomlands, deep shade, low-fertility areas, highly productive pastures or hay fields, and highly degraded pastures.

Meadow fescue was nearly always found in close proximity to remnant oak savanna habitats. Finding no evidence for introduction of meadow fescue seed from cultivars in the 20th century, we conclude that meadow fescue was introduced to this region by immigrants and settlers in the late 19th/early 20th century. We hypothesize that meadow fescue survived the late 20th century mechanization of agriculture, including row cropping, in a few pastures that escaped the plow and in remnant oak savanna habitats

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Project Location:

Driftless Area

Primary audience and participants:

Graziers statewide

Our analysis of DNA markers in meadow fescue has identified four subpopulations in this region. Three of the subpopulations are localized to Grant County, Iowa County, and the La Crosse region (including both WI and MN sites). The fourth population was found across the entire sampling region, ranging from southern Lafayette County to the La Crosse region and including sites in all three states. The European origins of these plants, identified by DNA markers found in the chloroplasts (that are inherited strictly from mothers), include both Northern and Western Europe and one group of unknown origin. We found many farms that contain admixtures of plants that appear to be members of different subpopulations and originate from different parts of Europe. All of these results indicate that there have been multiple introductions of meadow fescue from Europe to this region. Following the introduction of meadow fescue to this region, additional mixing and hybridization occurred between strains of different origins, largely by exchange or sale of seeds between neighbors or as part of an early regional seed industry.

We have yet to conduct agronomic field studies on different populations of meadow fescue from this region. To this point, we have conducted a seed increase of 90 different localized accessions, each collected from a different farm or different habitat within one farm, throughout the region. These seeds will be used to conduct field studies of agronomic traits to determine if there is significant variability associated with meadow fescue collected from different farms, habitats, or environments.

Finally, we have an update on the 2008 endophyte tests. We tested 800 plants, finding 793 to be infected with an endophytic fungus that is non-toxic to livestock. Further testing has confirmed that the seven non-infected plants were not meadow fescue, resulting in a 100% infection rate of the 793 plants tested on eight different farms within this region. We have not yet initiated studies to determine why these plants are all infected with an endophyte.

Completed Technical Assistance Projects

Grant #	Organization	Area Covered	New Plans	New Acres	Revised Plans	Revised Acres
607-1	Southwest Badger RC&D	Crawford, Grant, Iowa, Green, LaFayette Co.	6	480		
608-1	Pri-Ru-Ta RC&D	Barron, Burnett, Polk, Rusk, Sawyer, Washburn Co.	16	615	4	301
802-1	Michael Fields Ag. Institute	Jefferson, Kenosha, Racine, Rock, Walworth, Waukesha Co.	6	156	9	508
803-1	Columbia County LWCD	Columbia Co.	4	373	3	298
807-1	Golden Sands RC&D	Wood, Portage, Waupaca, Waushara, Adams, Juneau, Marquette, Marathon, & Monroe Co.	13	896	2	115
811-1	Pri-Ru-Ta RC&D	Ashland, Bayfield, Douglas, Iron Co.	10	624		
813-1	Pri-Ru-Ta RC&D	Clark, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, Taylor Co.	24	1,830	9	300
815-1	River Country RC&D	Chippewa, Clark, Dunn, Eau Claire Co.	11	750	20	1,261
819-1	River Country RC&D	Dunn, Pepin, Pierce, St. Croix	11	934	4	649
823-1	Glacierland RC&D	Brown, Calumet, Door, Fond du Lac, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Outagamie, Sheboygan, Winnebago, and the Oneida Nation	10	796	1	46
Totals			111	7,454	52	3,478



On-Going Projects

This section contains highlights and updates from all on-going Technical Assistance, Education and Research projects



Columbia-Dodge Grazing Network: Continuing to Build On Our Success (804-2)

2009 HIGHLIGHTS

- Held 5 pasture walks with over 120 attendees
- Held a spring grazing meeting with 25 attendees
- Will be having annual winter meeting in next few months to plan pasture walks for next season as well as some formal grazing education
- One-on-one educational assistance to 15 graziers, including 2 farm visits

Grant Project Objectives:

- 1) Provide grazing management education to Columbia and Dodge County livestock and dairy farmers through teaching, technical assistance, and farmer to farmer learning
- 2) Promote environmentally sound grazing management and enhance awareness among graziers and natural resource managers of the value of well managed grazing in natural resource protection
- 3) Evaluate the effectiveness of on-going education and technical assistance efforts in Columbia and Dodge Counties

Contact: Joe Bollman 608-742-9682 joe.bollman@ces.uwex.edu

Southeast Wisconsin Grazing Technical Assistance Project (806-2)

2009 HIGHLIGHTS

- Held 6 pasture walks and 4 farm tours/field trips
- Over 250 one-on-one contacts with individual farmers, including 77 farm visits to over 43 farms
- Wrote 19 grazing plans, 18 implemented
- Spoke with farmers and graziers at several conferences or events including the Organic Field Day in Kewaskum, Farm Technology Days, Sheep and Wool Festival, World Dairy Expo
- Hosted a pasture seed workshop in Jefferson
- Will be hosting a grazing seminar and an organic dairy nutrition course this winter

Grant Project Objectives:

- 1) Increase the number of farms using Managed Grazing
- 2) Improve the ecological and productive condition of existing pastures
- 3) Promote managed grazing as a viable, conservation-based farming practice to both farmers and the general public

Contact: Diane Herman 414-774-6562 dianeherman3dmd@wi.rr.com

Marathon and Lincoln County MIG Promotion and Implementation Project (810-2)

2009 HIGHLIGHTS

-Wrote 6 Network newsletters and distributed to over 600 graziers in our network

-Held 8 pasture walks during this time, one fencing demonstration, and two on-farm workshops featuring national experts in managed grazing including Darrell Emmick and Jim Gerrish, with over 400 total attendees for all events

-Worked with Amish, Menonite, Women and Disabled farmers

-Worked with a local dairy discussion group to help plan a new dairy grazing operation including 80 acres of pasture, with new facilities including a swing parlor and freestall winter housing.

-Over 600 one-on-one contacts with individual farmers, including 70 farm visits

-Wrote 21 grazing plans, 18 implemented

Grant Project Objectives:

1) Reduce cropland erosion and animal waste runoff into the waters of the state

2) Attract and educate beginning farmers and farmers new to grazing about M.I.G

3) Educate the agricultural lenders, educators, and agri-business professionals about the benefits of M.I.G

Contact: Paul Daigle (715) 261-6006 padaigle@mail.co.marathon.wi.us

River Country Educational Assistance Program (820-2)

2009 HIGHLIGHTS

-Held 5 pasture walks with a total of 63 attendees, including one walk with a UW-Eau Claire Conservation Biology class

-Over 100 one-on-one contacts with individual farmers, including 48 farm visits

-Attended grassland workshop in New Richmond

-Plans for the winter include: 2 winter discussion groups, 1 spring conference, 1 FFA Classroom session, 1 formal presentation at a local environmental club, and 1 spring pasture walk focusing on grassland birds.

-Collaborated with the UW-River Falls Sustainable Agriculture Advisory Committee

Grant Project Objectives:

1) Provide on farm educational events for farmers and agricultural professionals about the benefits of MIG and how a grazing operation handles managing the various stages of grass during the entire growing season

2) Provide educational opportunities on beginning and advanced grazing management topics

3) Provide direct on farm, one-on-one, educational sessions for beginning and advanced graziers, and landowners who are interested in implementing MIG systems on their farms

Contact: Brian Brezinski (715) 834-9672 river_country@hotmail.com

Crawford County Grass Based Economic Development Program (822-2)

2009 HIGHLIGHTS

- Held 10 pasture walks with over 280 total attendees for all events
- Worked with Amish, Hispanic, and Women farmers
- Over 50 one-on-one contacts with individual farmers, including 12 farm visits
- Have increased awareness of "Plant Your Roots in Crawford County" (PYRICC) including a poster at the WI Grazing Conference. Also ran ads in Graze and in promo materials at the World Dairy Expo.
- Working with the Crawford County Treasurer to identify land owners that would have land that could be grazed and if grazed that land would have lower property taxes on it. Currently a single township has been processed and the ten remaining townships are being processed.

Grant Project Objectives:

- 1) Create 10 new grass-based farm businesses from within Crawford County by April, 2010
- 2) Transition 10 farms from traditional livestock production to a managed intensive grazing system by April, 2010
- 3) Provide educational opportunities on grass based agriculture to 150 landowners

Contact: Vance Haugen (608) 326-0223 vance.haugen@ces.uwex.edu

The WI School for Beginning Dairy and Livestock Farmers - Training in Dairy/Livestock Farm Start-up and Managed Grazing Systems (829-2)

2009 HIGHLIGHTS

- Conducted the three-term Pasture-based Dairy/Livestock Seminar at 6 distance education sites and on the UW-Madison campus, 60 students
- Held 6th Annual Ride to Farm to raise money for the School and to raise awareness about MIG
- Had many articles written in numerous publications including The Capital Times, The Country Today, Graze, WI State Journal, Agri-View, WI State Farmer
- Secured 5 on-farm internships for students this year
- Had promotional displays at State FFA convention, Kickapoo Country Fair, and WI Association of State Ag. Educators convention
- Conducted a one week pasture management class

Grant Project Objectives:

- 1) To teach and to train individuals in start-up pasture-based dairy and livestock farming; to help would-be farmers design, implement, and operate a managed grazing system as the major source for their livestock feed
- 2) Increase the number of acres (particularly highly-erodible land) in managed, pasture-based farming
- 3) Increase the number of people entering farming in Wisconsin

Richard Cates (608) 265-6437 rlcates@mhtc.net

Providing Research-Based Educational Grazing Resources to Wisconsin's Agricultural Communities (902-2)

2009 HIGHLIGHTS

- Held 11 educational presentations around the state to 274 participants
- Provided support to 3 on-farm research projects as well as 1 other GLCI funded education project
- 26 one-on-one contacts with individual farmers,
- Provided support for UW and other Agency partners at the World Dairy Expo and Farm Technology Days.
- Attended 6 pasture walks and workshops held by other agencies and grazing networks
- Worked with Women farmers

Grant Project Objectives:

- 1) Develop educational materials to meet the needs of dairy and live-stock producers, agribusiness partners, and government agency interests for research-based information on pasture-based farming systems
- 2) Facilitate identification, development, coordination and support of on-farm pasture research opportunities across Wisconsin
- 3) Provide statewide UWEX support via consultation to individual, group, and/or on-farm requests from farmers for research-based answers to pasture management questions

Contact: Rhonda Gildersleeve (608) 723-6243 rhonda.gildersleeve@ces.uwex.edu

GrassWorks Annual Grazing Conference (904-2)

2009 HIGHLIGHTS

- Held initial planning meeting with farmers
- Worked with Women farmers
- Facilitated bi-weekly conference calls with planning committee to brainstorm, prioritize, and choose topics and speakers for the conference
- Researched and chose conference venue
- Began solicitation of local and grass-fed foods for the conference
- Wrote a grant to secure additional funding for the 2011 conference
- Researched and contracted with an on-line conference registration service
- Created publicity strategy
- Contracted with brochure designer

Grant Project Objectives:

- 1) Increase knowledge in the grazing community
- 2) Increase grazing community cohesiveness
- 3) Increase adoption of grazing by those new to the practice

Contact: Valerie Dantoin (920) 590-1511 grass@granitewave.com

GrassWorks Communication and Outreach (905-2)

2009 HIGHLIGHTS

- Hired part time writer
- Wrote and sent newsletter to mailing list
- Wrote 4 fact sheet pamphlets, on the topics of grazing and the environment, better farming better food, vitamins and antioxidants in grassfed, and saturated fat and omega 3's
- Presented at 5 events across the state
- Wrote 2 new grant proposals
- Posted over 100 pasture walks on the current events calendar on the website
- Hired 2 ambassadors who presented at approximately 20 pasture walks statewide

Grant Project Objectives:

- 1) Increase communication in the grazing community
- 2) Increase communication to policy makers
- 3) Increase communication between graziers and the general public. Raise awareness of the benefits of grazing for all citizens

Contact: Valerie Dantoin (920) 590-1511 grass@granitewave.com

GrassWorks Training and Facilitation (906-2)

2009 HIGHLIGHTS

- Held educators roundtable and provided training on how to conduct a good pasture walk. 30 people attended this meeting
- Working in NE WI to fill in a grazing network gap
- Working on creating a plan to connect grazing education around the state
- Working on creating a piece about network building and holding successful pasture walks

Grant Project Objectives:

- 1) Deliver quality training in education methods to grazing network leaders or program staff
- 2) Create a draft strategic plan for grazing education activity in the state
- 3) Meet the needs of underserved areas of the state

Contact: Valerie Dantoin (920) 590-1511 grass@granitewave.com

Continuing Education for South Central Wisconsin Graziers (908-2)

2009 HIGHLIGHTS

-Held 3 pasture walks with 85 attendees. Pasture walks also featured guest speakers including Michael Casler, Darrell Emmick and Laura Paine

-Worked with Amish and Women farmers

-This winter will feature planning pasture walks and grazing workshops for next season

Grant Project Objectives:

1) Provide new information to the Greater Sauk Area Graziers network to they can improve upon their current grazing management practices

2) Increase membership in the Greater Sauk Area Graziers Network with a special emphasis on underserved and beginning farmers

3) Encourage more farmers in the area to develop and implement MIG as part of their farming operation. Continuing education for those already using MIG is also important

Contact: Denise Brusveen (608) 355-3257 denise.brusveen@ces.uwex.edu

Managed Grazing in the Chippewa Valley (913-2)

2009 HIGHLIGHTS

-Held 10 pasture walks with 414 attendees. The project manager also attended 5 pasture walks within other networks

-Collaborated with leaders of other grazing networks to maximize attendance at pasture walks and provide informative workshops

-Held a bus trip to Cedar Summit Dairy to learn about direct marketing

-Presented at Earth Day Education Event at St. Croix Falls Recycling Center to over 300 students from school districts all around WI and MN

-Sent out information to mailing list about UW-River Falls Spring Grazing School, project manager attended along with two members of the network

Grant Project Objectives:

1) Provide educational opportunities for members of the Chippewa Valley Grazing Network and the public to promote the implementation of proper MIG practices, including 7 pasture walks, a Winter Grazing conference, presentations at local FFA and Ag high school students, WSBDF Distance ED

2) Provide one-on-one farm visits to the network members who request a consultation visit. Efforts will be made to work with Amish and Mennonite communities to promote MIG

3) Help farmers transition to MIG

Contact: Jim Jackson (715) 834-5421

Building a Community of Experienced Profitable Grazers with Markets (914-2)

2009 HIGHLIGHTS

- Held 6 pasture walks
- Presented and had a promo table at Earthfest in Sheboygan, Woodlake Market in Kohler, and the Fall Food and Energy Festival in Chilton
- Held a Food as Medicine talk at Northeast Technical College
- Working on organizing two networks in NE WI where there currently are gaps
- Organizing a forum on grazing and water quality

Grant Project Objectives:

- 1) Provide an educational experience for individuals or farmers new to grazing and also to veteran graziers
- 2) Supply grazing plans to farmers transitioning to grazing with help from NRCS
- 3) Organize two new grazing networks in NE WI where networks currently do not exist
- 4) Develop or improve grass-fed products with improved marketing techniques

Contact: James Costello (920) 465-3006 office@glacierland.org

St. Croix Valley Graziers Educational Assistance Program (915-2)

2009 HIGHLIGHTS

- Held 5 pasture walks with 181 attendees
- Worked with Women Farmers
- Over 200 one-on-one contacts including 65 individual farm visits
- Collaborated with UW-River Falls Grazing School
- Held spring and fall network planning meetings
- Will be holding one winter pasture walk and 4 winter discussion groups

Grant Project Objectives:

- 1) Provide on-farm educational events for farmers, ag professionals and the general public about the benefits of MIG and how a grazing operation manages the various stages of grass during the entire growing season
- 2) Provide educational opportunities on beginning and advanced grazing management topics
- 3) Provide direct on farm, one-on-one, educational sessions for beginning and advanced graziers, and landowners who are interested in implementing MIG systems on their farms

Contact: Juliet Tomkins (715) 425-6037 juliet.tomkins@uwrf.edu

Coulee Graziers MIG Program (916-2)

2009 HIGHLIGHTS

- Held 8 pasture walks with 180 attendees
- Worked with Amish, Menonite, and Women Farmers
- Over 300 one-on-one contacts including 40 individual farm visits
- Planning winter discussion sessions and a winter workshop
- Working with local Tech College to secure WSBDF Distance Education site

Grant Project Objectives:

- 1) Provide on-farm educational events for farmers, ag professionals and the general public about the benefits of MIG and how a grazing operation manages the various stages of grass during the entire growing season
- 2) Provide educational opportunities on beginning and advanced grazing management topics
- 3) Provide direct on farm, one-on-one, educational sessions for beginning and advanced graziers, and landowners who are interested in implementing MIG systems on their farms

Contact: Roger Kaufman (715) 284-2422

Grazing Outreach in the SW WI Grassland & Stream Conservation Area (917-2)

2009 HIGHLIGHTS

- DNR board did not approve creation of the SW WI Grassland & Stream Conservation Area until late June, which means that DNR staff have only started to plan activities in the project area. This has slowed the start of this project as it has been waiting for the DNR to identify priority areas that they will be working in.
- Had 5 meetings with DNR to establish demonstration projects in the area
- Attended 3 pasture walks and 1 UWEX grazing program at UW Lancaster Research Station
- Working to identify grazing landowners in the area who might be interested in demonstration projects within priority bird conservation areas identified by DNR staff

Grant Project Objectives:

- 1) Increase awareness of managed grazing as a method to provide habitat for grassland birds and maintain grass cover in riparian areas through educational activities and programs
- 2) Support goals of DNR SWGSCA Feasibility Study and Master Plan conservation strategies
- 3) Encourage a few clusters of landowners adjacent to each other to create large blocks of land managed with late-cut hay/grazing or controlled riparian grazing

Contact: Carl Fredericks (608) 437-4395 rehlfred@mhtc.net

MIG Establishment in Nine Central Wisconsin Counties (918-2)

2009 HIGHLIGHTS

- Held 5 pasture walks with 175 attendees
- Held a guest speaker meeting with Darrell Emmick
- Over 200 one-on-one contacts
- Collaborated with WI DNR on renting 2 no-till drills which were used on 7 farms and 210 acres
- Held 6 profitability discussion groups
- Published one edition of "The Grazing Planner," distributed to over 1,500 farmers in Wood, Portage and Waupaca Counties
- Developed and aired a grazing public service announcement on WSAW Channel 7 during earth week. A total of thirty-five 2 minute spots aired through out the week

Grant Project Objectives:

- 1) Attract new MIG farmers and offer continued education to established producers, assisting them in developing sound pasture and business management strategies resulting in increased profitability, superior lifestyle, improved production, healthier environment and local economy
- 2) Educate farmers, ag lenders, agribusiness professionals, educators, policy makers and the general public on the benefits MIG provides in terms of farm profitability, economic stability, business opportunities, and environmental health

Contact: Teal Fyksen (715) 343-6216 teal.fyksen@wi.usda.gov

North Central Grazier MIG Education and Demonstration Project (921-2)

2009 HIGHLIGHTS

- Held 5 pasture walks with 150 attendees
- Promoted sustainable farming conference in Hayward
- Over 60 one-on-one contacts including 5 individual farm visits
- Wrote 4 grazing plans, 4 implemented
- Worked with Menonite and Women farmers, as well as woodland owners
- Attended a GrassWorks meeting to find better ways of coordinating speakers and conferences
- Planning a 2010 Winter Grazing Conference

Grant Project Objectives:

- 1) Through educational and demonstration efforts, this project will have increased by 70 the number of active graziers in the Northcentral Graziers Network by September 2011. This project will provide assistance to 10 underserved farmers and 20 new livestock producers by April 2010
- 2) Continue to publish the quarterly newsletter "The Grazing Planner" through Sept 2011
- 3) Outreach to business community and the general public

Contact: Lanice Szomi (715) 748-2008 lanice.szomi@rcdnet.net

Grass-Legume Mixtures for Improved Yield Distribution and Sward Density (831-3)

2009 HIGHLIGHTS

-Sampled 21 grass and grass-legume mixtures at weekly intervals throughout the 2009 growing season

-Collected approximately 300 forage samples, and completed hand separations on 25% of these to develop NIRS equations to determine grass-legume proportions in the mixtures over the growing season

-ground all samples and they are being prepared for laboratory analysis of crude protein, neutral detergent fiber, neutral detergent fiber digestibility, dry matter digestibility, and NIRS scanning for species composition

-The timeline for completion of the laboratory work is the end of March. Data analysis and summary should be completed by the end of May, and data interpretation and writing of the thesis should be completed by August 30. The grant ran through October 1, 2009, so the project will need extra time, but not extra money to complete its work.

Grant Project Objectives:

- 1) Quantify growth rate, seasonal distribution of yield, species composition and nutritive value of select grasses and grass-legume mixtures
- 2) Determine sward density of select grasses and grass-legume mixtures over the growing season

Contact: Ken Albrecht (608) 262-2314 kaalbrec@wisc.edu

Warm and Cool-Season Grasses for Grazing: Are Improved Varieties Better? (833-3)

2009 HIGHLIGHTS

-Data collected during the 2008 growing season including species composition, forage quantity and forage quality was analyzed for all 5 farms. This data was been combined with data collected in 2006 and 2007 for further analysis

-Data collected during the 2009 season includes species composition, forage quantity, forage quality and peak standing biomass. Additionally, individual plants of big bluestem and Indian grass have been marked to conduct an etiolated growth (growth in the absence of light) experiment in spring 2010 to quantify belowground organic reserves

-A pasture walk was conducted in mid July at the project site consisting of approximately 60 visitors from the Columbia-Dodge County grazing network. A brief presentation of project motivations and experimental design was given to visitors followed by a question and answer session.

Grant Project Objectives:

- 1) Compare productivity and persistence of introduced, improved temperate grass varieties under typical and "best management" scenarios
- 2) Determine relative contributions of management and adjacent vegetation to plant community trajectories in renovated pastures
- 3) Develop effective methods of establishing, maintaining, and managing grazing of native warm season pastures in WI

Contact: Randy Jackson (608) 261-1480 rdjackson@wisc.edu

Do Early Grazing Experiences Influence How Lactating Cows Graze? (834-3)

2009 HIGHLIGHTS

-Sixty four heifers were assigned to the study in August. Italian ryegrass pastures were established at the Marshfield station during the summer and the 32 heifers (Treatment groups 1 and 3) were put on pastures from September through October. The other two groups of heifers were fed in confinement.

-Heifer growth, pasture yield and pasture samples for nutrient composition were collected in September and October. There is nothing to report yet as far as statistical analysis

-Presented an overview of the study and our objectives at the Grassworks Grazing Conference is Stevens Point in February 2009

-A graduate student was hired to manage the project in 2009 and 2010

Grant Project Objectives:

- 1) To answer questions that are important to dairy farmers about the validity of University grazing research. Results of this study would impact the design of facilities and the focus of dairy research at UW
- 2) To determine how dairy cattle adapt to grazing
- 3) To determine if experiences with grazing at a young age influence how lactating cows graze
- 4) To determine how previous experiences affect grazing behavior

Contact: Dave Combs (608) 263-4844 dkcombs@wisc.edu

Feasibility of Dairy Pasture Irrigation on Wisconsin's Central Sands (837-3)

2009 HIGHLIGHTS

-Started irrigating later than anticipated. A dry spring and early summer induced pasture dormancy by the end of June

-At first, irrigating was exclusively during the overnight periods. It was obvious continuous irrigation was necessary to see a reversal in pasture dormancy and an increase in production. Therefore water was applied continuously from 7/12-7/28, while moving the irrigation system approximately every 12 hours. During a 12 hour period $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre received approximately 1.5" of water

-The initial observations during that period implied that K line irrigation was unable to supply the necessary water in order to maintain pasture production. As irrigation continued, soil moisture levels became more consistent, and soil field capacity became easier to maintain

-Economic feasibility will be determined by considering initial financial investment, seasonal variable costs as they apply to an efficient application of irrigated water, and economic value of forage production from irrigated paddocks

Grant Project Objectives:

- 1) To determine the economic feasibility of installing and operating k-line irrigation systems on grazing-based livestock farms in WI, especially farms on droughty, coarse-textured soil types

Contact: Teal Fyksen (715) 343-6216 teal.fyksen@wi.usda.gov

Benefits of Increasing Grazing Height on Weed Suppression (838-3)

2009 HIGHLIGHTS

-In November five grazing heights (5cm, 10cm, 15cm, 20cm and an untreated control (UTC) were implemented and repeated in May and June. Weed emergence did not differ between treatments at either site in May and June even though LAI in April were higher in the UTC, 15 and 20cm treatments (2.0-3.6) compared to the 5 and 10cm treatments (0.3-1.1).

-Total forage collected since November was greatest with the 5cm treatments compared to other treatments with reductions between 44-82 % across sites. While 10 and 15cm treatments did not differ, 20cm treatments had 49-61% less forage than 10cm treatments.

-While differences in forage quality were present at each grazing interval, no differences in relative feed value or crude protein were observed when values were averaged across grazing intervals. Results suggest that increasing grazing heights do not reduce germination of weed species studied, but can change forage quantity between some treatments.

Grant Project Objectives:

- 1) Determine the effect of increasing grazing heights from fall through spring on emergence and establishment of burdock, plumless thistle, and Canada thistle seedlings
- 2) Determine the mechanisms responsible for suppression of weed emergence
- 3) Estimate how grazing treatments affect yield of forage species

Contact: Mark Renz (608) 263-7427 mrenz@wisc.edu

Development of a Grass-Based Cattle Finishing System for Wisconsin (840-3)

2009 HIGHLIGHTS

-On May 19 the trial began with 18 steers in the feedlot group and 18 steers in the pasture group. Each group consisted of 10 Buelingo steers purchased from 5 different Buelingo breeders, and 8 Angus-cross steers from the UWRF cow herd. The feedlot group received a typical high concentrate ration with 80% corn and 20% forage. The pasture group was rotationally grazed on paddocks of newly established grass/legume mix. These paddocks contained a variety of different grass plots and the legume is either red clover or kura clover.

-Both groups were weighed monthly and beginning in July scanned at the time of weighing as well. Scans were performed for backfat, loin muscle area, and percent intramuscular fat.

-The project has also begun an economic analysis of the cost of production for the two systems. The total feed cost for the feedlot steers has been determined and labor data for both feedlot and pasture has been collected. Other cost factors for both systems will be compiled and analyzed during the next three months.

Grant Project Objectives:

- 1) To determine what type of growth performance, carcass merit, and economic outcomes might be expected from a grass-based beef finishing system in a WI setting utilizing a well-managed intensive rotational grazing system

Contact: Gary Onan (715) 425-3704 gary.onan@uwrf.edu

Potassium Fertility Rates for Management Intensive Grazed Pastures (935-3)

2009 HIGHLIGHTS

-This on-farm applied research project is a continuation of a previous education and on-farm demonstration project at two farms per county in Clark and Marathon Counties where this project was done in 2007 and 2008 (Project No. 628-2).

-Potassium fertilizer was applied at the following rates: none, 20 percent of the recommended rate, 60 percent of the recommended rate, and 100 percent of the recommended rate based on the yield level indicated by the farmer

-The legume content of the pastures was measured. Pasture growth was measured before and after grazing events and dry matter production and amount grazed were calculated. Pasture forage quality was measured at alternate grazing events.

-Calculations of the yield and economic effects of the potassium fertilization for the Marathon and Clark County farms will be done. The data from all the farms will be statistically analyzed this fall/winter

Grant Project Objectives:

1) To examine the relationship between grazed pasture yield and other parameters and varying rates of potassium fertilization based on UWEX fertility recommendations

Contact: Kenneth Barnett (715) 355-4531 ken.barnett@ces.uwex.edu

Does Grazing as Heifers Affect How Lactating Cows Adapt to Pastures (936-3)

2009 HIGHLIGHTS

-Sixty four heifers were assigned to the study in August. Italian ryegrass pastures were established at the Marshfield station during the summer and the 32 heifers (Treatment groups 1 and 3) were put on pastures from September through October. The other two groups of heifers were fed in confinement.

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2) To determine how dairy cattle adapt to grazing

3) To determine if experiences with grazing at a young age influence how lactating cows graze

4) To determine how previous experiences affect grazing behavior

Contact: Dave Combs (608) 263-4844 dkcombs@wisc.edu

Technical Assistance Projects In Progress

Grant #	Organization	Area Covered	New Plans	New Acres	Revised Plans	Revised Acres
805-1	Town and Country RC&D	Dane, Dodge, Columbia, Green Lake, Jefferson, Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Rock, Walworth, Washington, Waukesha Co.	19	764		
809-1	Marathon Co. Conservation, Planning and Zoning Dept.	Lincoln and Marathon Co.	21	1405		
817-1	Coulee Grazier & Grass Farmer	Buffalo, Jackson, and Trempealeau Co.	16	1019	40	3157
821-1	Southwest Badger RC&D	Crawford, Grant, Green, Iowa, and Lafayette Co.	30	2390	3	183
827-1	Pri-Ru-Ta RC&D	Barron, Burnett, Polk, Rusk, Sawyer, and Washburn Co.	8	310		
929-1	Golden Sands RC&D	Adams, Juneau, Marathon, Marquette, Monroe, Portage, Waupaca, Waushara, and Wood Co.	13	896	2	115
931-1	Vernon Co. LWCD	Vernon Co.	1	80		
933-1	Pri-Ru-Ta RC&D	Clark, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, and Taylor Co.	3	168	1	40
Totals			111	7,031	46	3,495

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Dairy farmer, Amherst Junction

Mary C. Anderson, Vice Chair
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Gerald Jaeger, Custom dairy heifer raiser, Campbellsport

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Dick Hauser, Beef producer, Richland Center

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Laura Paine, Grazing and Organic Specialist, Wisconsin DATCP
Dave Vetrano, Fisheries Team Supervisor, Wisconsin DNR



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